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AUTHOR Abel, Emily
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ABSTRACT

A study of the impact of Proposition 13 on the part-time faculty at California universities and colleges is hampered by: (1) the invisibility of part-time instructors in institutional reports and statements; (2) the confusion of Proposition 13 with other factors, such as declining enrollments; and (3) the fact that the full impact of Proposition 13 has not yet been felt. However, current trends indicate that as financial difficulties intensify, increasing numbers of part-timers will be fired, the conditions of those who remain will worsen, and full-time positions will be converted into part-time slots at an accelerated rate. Background information about part-time faculty demonstrates its vulnerability to lay-offs. Although part-timers make up 58% of the California community college faculty and are increasingly professional, rather than lay, educators, they are underpaid and provided with limited secretarial assistance and few opportunities to participate in faculty meetings. This vulnerability became evident when, after the passage of Proposition 13, 7,000 part-time instructors were laid off, and those who remained experienced a cut in hours. Because of the disportionate number of women and third world people in the part-time faculty as compared to the full-time ranks, Proposition 13 may also be a blow to affirmative action. Part-time instructors must take positive action to alter these trends. (JP)

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THE VIEW FROM THE BOTTOM:
THE IMPACT OF PROPOSITION 13 ON PART-TIME FACULTY

A Paper Presented at the Annual Conference of the
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Emily Abel
Women's Studies
California State University,
Long Beach

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I want to say first that I am very glad to be on this panel. I have taught on a part-time basis for a number of years--first in a community college and now in the women's studies program at California State University, Long Beach, and this is one of the first times in which part-time faculty have been included in a discussion of the impact of Proposition 13.

The day after the initiative passed, I went to a meeting of the Board of Trustees of the community college where I was then teaching, and I received a two-page flyer outlining the college's response to this initiative. Nowhere was there any mention of part-timers who, at that point, constituted eighty percent of the total faculty and taught well over half of all the classes. I did read that the faculty might be required to teach an extra course, but the use of the term "faculty" was reserved for that minority of teachers who held full-time appointments. During the unusually long meeting that ensued, the pros and cons of the proposed increase in the teaching load were hotly debated, but no one mentioned the repercussions for part-time faculty who, of course, were likely to lose their jobs.

This experience was repeated in the state college where I have taught since the fall of 1976. Last year, for example, I frequently received flyers in my mail box asking

for my support for new proposals to prevent lay-offs in the wake of Proposition 13. The only trouble was that at least some of these plans involved the lay-off of massive numbers of part-time faculty.

The invisibility of part-time faculty has hampered my efforts to acquire information about the impact of Proposition 13. When I was asked to give this presentation, I thought my job would be fairly simple: I would simply call up the chancellors' offices of the various segments of higher education in this state and ask for information about part-time faculty. Unfortunately, though, many of these offices claimed that they do not keep records about part-time faculty, and they thought that I was very peculiar to keep insisting that they must have some information that I could use. I also requested that I be sent various statistical reports prepared by these offices, but virtually all omitted any mention of part-time faculty. According to one staff member of the CSUC system, "all data we get on part-timers is sort of flaky, so we just ignore it." In fact, I doubt that this information is really unavailable. My assumption is rather that these offices have strong reasons for not releasing it.

There are other reasons as well why it was difficult for me to prepare this talk, and some of the obstacles I encountered illustrate the plight of part-time faculty. For example, the primary piece of information I wanted to know was how many part-timers have lost their jobs. But no one

could answer this question because part-timers are not, according to official policy, laid-off. No matter how long they have been teaching at an institution, they are always considered temporary labor and are hired semester by semester or, at best, for a year at a time. Moreover, as their job offers carefully specify, they can be fired when enrollment shifts or declines, when funding drops and when a full-time faculty member wants to teach the class they have been assigned. The official language of most institutions obscures the human impact of such incidents. Administrators speak about "cancelling classes," "cutting sections," or "reassigning full-time faculty," while reserving the dreaded word "lay-off" for the dismissal of tenure-track faculty. Part-timers can thus lose their jobs without even counting in university statistics. I recently saw a newspaper article that suggests that the avoidance of the term "lay-off" is common in the world of industry as well: the chief financial officer of International Telephone and Telegraph attempts to soften the impact of his policies by speaking only about "head-count reductions."

Another reason it is difficult to assess the impact of Proposition 13 on part-time faculty is that, as I am sure other members of the panel will also note, it is hard to disentangle this initiative from other factors, such as declining enrollment. This is especially a problem for the state colleges which are funded entirely by the state and thus are affected only indirectly by 13. The community colleges receive most of their revenues from local property

taxes--or at least they did until June 1978--but they too have suffered recently from a dwindling student body. But of course these two factors are not entirely unrelated. We will see that in some cases the student body was intentionally reduced. Furthermore, when programs are cut, class size increased and professors demoralized, students tend to grow discouraged, reduce their course loads and occasionally drop-out entirely. Students who assumed they were headed for careers in government or education thought twice about registering for college in the fall term of 1978. Since 13, the state government has discouraged the growth of community college enrollment.

Finally, the major impact of Proposition 13 has not yet been felt. Although property taxes decreased by 55 percent, local revenues were augmented by the state bail-out funds and by local reserves. The major question is what will happen when state and local surpluses are depleted. Studies recently published by both the Rand Corporation and the legislative analyst in Sacramento conclude that the major cuts have not yet been made. In fact, they suggest that what we are experiencing is the lull before the storm. Both studies were written before the Gann initiative, imposing even tighter limits on government spending, was passed by an overwhelming majority in November. And now we are threatened by the initiative known as Jarvis II. Thus, the prognosis is gloomy. What I can discuss is not so much what has happened as what we can anticipate if current trends continue.

I will concentrate on the part-timers in the community colleges and in the state university and college system. As many of you undoubtedly know, California has a three-tiered system of public higher education. At the top of this very hierarchical structure are the eight University of California campuses. At the bottom is the community college system, with 106 separate campuses which together educate 70 percent of all undergraduates in the state. In between are the 19 campuses of the state college and university system. Part-timers are concentrated in the lower two tiers, i.e., in the colleges and universities established to accommodate groups previously denied access to higher education. It is true that UC uses and some say abuses large numbers of T.A.'s and instructors on "soft money," but these groups are not exactly analagous to part-time faculty. Furthermore, so far, the impact of 13 has been least severe on UC.

It is important to present some background information about part-time faculty in the community colleges and the state college and university system. In California, as elsewhere throughout the nation, the number of part-time faculty has grown rapidly during the 1970's. One reason many people ignore part-timers is that they assume that these teachers exist only at the edges of the system of higher education. In fact, they occupy a central position in the nation's colleges and universities. Community colleges are especially dependent on part-time faculty. Indeed, by 1975, the faculty of the community college system

in California consisted of 14,273 full-time and 20,027 part-time instructors. Thus, 58 percent of the teachers were employed only on an hourly basis. In addition, 7,505 (or 53 percent) of the full-time staff also taught at their own institutions on an overload basis. Altogether, 38 percent of all graded, credit classes were taught by employees who were being paid an hourly salary. Furthermore, 4,394 (or 90 percent) of the instructors of the ungraded, adult education classes, were part-timers.

During the early 1970s, the number of temporary instructors in the state college and university system also began to rise--steadily, if not quite so dramatically as in the community colleges. In this system it is necessary to discuss two groups--part-time faculty and full-time temporary instructors who are generally paid a regular full-time salary and are granted certain fringe benefits, but are off the "tenure-track," and hence have no security of employment or opportunity for advancement. Between the fall of 1972 and the fall of 1977 (i.e., pre-Proposition 13), the full-time faculty increased by 91 individuals, less than one percent. By contrast, the part-time segment increased by 50 percent, representing a gain of 2,246 individuals. The total temporary sector--i.e., the part-timers plus the full-time temporary faculty--also increased by 50 percent, representing a total addition of 2,562 individuals. Let me state these figures in another way: in 1972, part-timers represented 29 percent of the faculty and both groups of temporary employees constituted 34 percent. By 1978, part-timers con-

stituted 38 percent of the faculty and the temporary category as a whole 44 percent.

The conditions of part-time employment are roughly similar in the two sectors. As I have noted, part-timers lack job security in both the community colleges and the state university and college system. Moreover, they are paid less that the prorated salary of their full-time counterparts. In CSUC they are paid 20 percent less per course than a full-time teacher and in the community colleges, 50 percent less. Furthermore, they are denied almost all fringe benefits. In some instances they lack offices and secretarial assistance. Also, part-timers are rarely invited to faculty meetings and virtually never paid for attending them. As a result, they cannot demonstrate a concern for the school, influence educational policies or exert any control over their own workplace.

Administrators frequently argue that the discriminatory treatment of part-timers is in fact justified because most of these teachers are not well qualified and because they do not need the money. The stereotypical part-timer is a businessman who stops off at the college one night a week for the enjoyment of sharing his expertise with a few students. It is certainly clear that the administration wants part-timers to conform to this stereotype. Two years ago, the vice chancellor for faculty and staff affairs in CSUC sent a letter to campus presidents stating that "it's cost effective to employ on a temporary full-time or part-time basis only those individuals who have other

full-time or part-time jobs to fall back on when they are no longer employed by the campus." Moreover, administrators try to ensure that part-timers are less qualified by denying them access to research funds, to reimbursement for travel to professional conferences and to released time for research and class preparation. In addition, administrators systematically discount and devalue the credentials of their part-time employees in various ways.

In fact, we currently have very little concrete information about the demographic characteristics of part-timers. I once conducted a survey of the part-time faculty at the community college where I taught and discovered that the credentials of the part-time faculty were virtually identical to those of their full-time counterparts. Moreover, about one-third derived at least half of their personal yearly income from their teaching position at the college. The typical part-time teacher was an unemployed academic who desperately wanted a regular teaching position. A study of the part-timers in the CSUC system suggests that the portrait of these teachers is fairly similar. Of those who answered a question pertaining to their income, a little under one-third claimed that at least 76 percent came from their part-time teaching position in the system. The Chancellor's task force on part-time employment concluded in 1977:

> Whereas a decade ago one generally did not expect to find many temporary faculty who possessed both the qualifications and the desire for a probationary position, there is now a class of well-qualified people holding temporary appointments.

The myths about part-time faculty are basically rationalizations, obscuring the real benefits accruing to the administration from the widespread employment of part-time faculty. Part-timers are cheaper, more expendable and more easily managed. The last factor is an increasingly important consideration in California today. Two years before the passage of 13, the Rodda Act, providing for the collective bargaining of community college teachers, went into effect. Faculty in CSUC and UC gained collective bargaining rights two months before 13 was passed.

Thus, it is easy to see that administrators are caught between two competing pressures. On the one hand, if they must make budget cuts, they will be pressured to fire large numbers of part-timers who can be laid-off so easily. The tragic irony, of course, is that, because part-timers are so cheap, large numbers will have to be fired to effect any savings. On the other hand, however, all administrators want to keep labor costs down and to gain greater control over the workplace. Hence, they have strong incentives for keeping a large contingent of part-time faculty.

One other aspect of part-time faculty is crucial to mention--namely the disproportionate representation of women and third world people among their ranks. Again, I am on fairly shakey ground, especially in dealing with the community colleges. The affirmative action officer of the whole community college system informed me that she keeps no data at all about part-time teachers despite the fact

that they constitute about two-thirds of the faculty she is responsible for over-seeing. Thus, I have had to rely on whatever information I could gather from individual community college districts.

Here, then, is what I know. As of October 1977, in the Los Angeles community college district which includes 9 separate campuses, there was a larger percentage of third world people among the part-time faculty but a smaller percentage of women. To be more specific, 38 percent of the full-time faculty were women and 19 percent were third world people. However, women constituted 29 percent of the part-time faculty and third world people 23 percent. It is not entirely surprising that women constitute such a large percentage of the full-time faculty. Women tend to be concentrated in non-elite schools, and community colleges are at the bottom of the hierarchy. Nevertheless, the discovery that there were more women among the full-timers than among the part-timers was unexpected. My survey of a community college faculty produced different results. Here the percentage of women on the part-time faculty was almost twice that of women on the full-time teaching staff. Women represented 27 percent of the full-time faculty and 53 percent of the part-timers. Unfortunately, I did not inquire into the racial background of the respondents. The affirmative action officer of the CSUC system does keep information about part-time faculty. According to the most recent report, there are proportionately twice as many women in the part-time

faculty as in the full-time ranks and 50 percent more third world people among the part-timers than among the full-timers.

In general, then, women and minorities tend to be concentrated in the part-time ranks. Thus, the fate of part-timers has serious repercussions for affirmative action. When part-time faculty members are laid-off, the percentage of women and third world people among the faculty will decline. This is consistent with the pattern in other areas of employment. Throughout the state, a disproportionate number of the people fired as a result of 13 have been women and minorities.

What, then, did happen when Proposition 13 was passed? The impact on the community colleges was felt immediately. These colleges are controlled by local boards and, at least until 13, about one-third of their funds came from local property taxes. With almost frantic haste, administrators and trustees cancelled summer school, reduced the number of course offerings for the fall and fired massive numbers of part-timers. The first classes to be eliminated tended to be the adult education courses, 90 percent of which had been taught by part-time teachers. By fall, 7,000 or just under one-quarter of all part-time faculty in the community colleges were no longer teaching. By contrast, the number of full-time teachers had declined by a mere 2 percent.

Unfortunately, we have no way of knowing what percentage of the fired part-timers were in fact full-time

faculty teaching an additional class or two on an overload basis and what percentage were what could be characterized as "bona fide" part-timers. Nevertheless, we can surmise that the first part-timers to go were those who conformed most closely to the portrait of part-time faculty I have drawn. In some districts, part-timers were dismissed according to seniority. Hence, the younger part-timers, who tended to be better qualified, were the first to lose their jobs. In addition, part-timers were fired disproportionately from the liberal arts fields which have experienced the sharpest enrollment decline.

What about those part-timers who remained? Many of those who customarily taught during the day are now assigned only night classes. Along with full-time faculty, part-timers in almost all districts received no salary increase during the 1978-79 academic year. If they had been among the lucky few to have an assignment for summer school, then of course they lost this job. More seriously, many of those part-timers who had been accustomed to teaching two classes were assigned only one. As a result, their salary was reduced by 50 percent.

In addition, class size has been increased and part-timers, along with other faculty, are thus subject to a speed-up. But, once again, part-timers are affected more severely than others. An increase in class size results in the reduction of the total number of classes and the dismissal of part-timers. Moreover, the minimum class size has been raised, "arbitrarily and indiscriminately,"

according to one union officer. As a result, part-timers are more likely than ever to have their classes cancelled.

What about other aspects of their working conditions? As we have seen, part-timers did not have much to lose. As one staff member in the chancellor's office remarked, part-time faculty never had much in the way of offices or secretarial services, so nothing much could be taken from them.

Few new cuts occurred this year and in some instances there have been strenuous efforts to restore programs reduced last year. However, this is a difficult enterprise. Academic programs cannot be disrupted one year and easily revived the next. Moreover, it is highly unlikely that part-timers were rehired on any priority basis. Only a few of the districts ever used a seniority system for the assignment of classes to part-time faculty. Furthermore, adequate records are not kept.

I lost a job at a community college as a result of Proposition 13. Of course, like most cases, mine falls into the gray area. Proposition 13 was passed shortly before the end of the spring semester. Once I turned in my final grades, I received no notification about my employment status. But this was not unusual. The college never notified part-time teachers about their schedules. Like students, we looked in the schedule of classes to see when our courses met and hoped that we did not have a conflict with any other job. But that summer when the class schedule appeared, names of all part-timers were omitted. Next to our classes was the word "staff." However, early on a

Sunday morning, the day before classes began for the fall semester, the chairman of the history department called to give me, as he put it, my "assignment." I said that I could not teach at the hours he had selected for me. So, like many others, I simply disappeared from that campus without ever counting in university lay-off statistics. But also--and more immediately to the point--that was the last I ever heard from him. He never called back to offer me a class the following semester although he needed an instructor for the class I customarily taught. What I did receive was a phone call from a good friend of mine asking me to recommend her for this position.

I want to mention one final trend at the community colleges: although many part-timers have lost their jobs, the conversion of full-time positions into part-time slots is continuing at an accelerated rate. During the first six months after the passage of 13, six times as many part-timers as full-timers were hired. This year, Long Beach City College hired 85 new part-time faculty and one full-time teacher.

The state colleges are following in the path of the community colleges. Despite warnings of massive lay-offs of part-timers, the number of part-time faculty remained fairly stationary last year. However, figures recently released by the chancellor's office show that the number of part-timers is down by 12 percent this fall. Although I was cautioned that these figures are preliminary, they are supported by my own study of Cal. State, Long

Beach, the largest campus in the system, where the number of part-time faculty dropped by about 10 percent this semester. In addition, as in the community colleges, the condition of employment of those part-timers who remain has deteriorated. Some part-timers have been denied the step increases to which they are entitled and at least a few were hired at a lower salary scale than before.

In sum, we could say that the writing is on the wall: as the financial difficulties of colleges and universities intensify, increasing numbers of part-timers will be fired; the conditions of those who remain will worsen and full-time positions will be converted into part-time slots at an accelerated rate. However, we do not have to view these trends as inevitable. Rather, we should put our energies into the development of strategies for fighting back. Most urgently we need to join forces with other workers, with the poor and with middle income people to work for progressive tax reform measures which will tax business but allow vital government services to continue.

We should also fight against the deteriorating condition of part-timers. As a first step, we need to obtain more information about this segment of the teaching force ourselves, to demand that state offices keep and make readily accessible accurate information about this large group of people who staff the public institutions of higher education, and to protest when part-timers are made invisible by the statements of administrators, full-

time faculty or academic unions.

Just as administrators have tended to neglect part-timers, so full-time faculty have traditionally set themselves apart from their part-time colleagues and accentuated the gap between the two groups. They draw a clear distinction between "regular" faculty (the real professionals) and the sub-stratum of sporadically employed part-time teachers. The latter are viewed not as victims of a biased and irrational selection system or of a tight job market but rather as failures in the academic race. Perceiving part-timers in this way, tenure-track faculty can then defend their own privileges and demand that their own "legitimate" grievances be met, while ignoring the worst abuses of part-time employment. Thus, in the present crisis, a favored method of saving jobs of endangered junior faculty is to encourage them to "retool" so that they can teach other subjects. As this example illustrates, there are definitely points of conflict between part-time and full-time faculty. We cannot deny that they are often in competition for a dwindling supply of resources. But we can be explicit about the effect any policy has on part-timers and try to frame policies that work to the advantage of both groups. After all, the disunity of the faculty benefits only the administration. And, in a larger sense, the two groups do share common goals. The widespread employment of poorly paid part-timers may well keep down the wages of all faculty. There are also plenty of indications that the conditions

of employment of part-timers are gradually being generalized throughout the academic profession.

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